



The Berrien County Historical Association

The Docket

The History Center at Courthouse Square

January 2020 | Volume 36, Issue 1

BCHA Events - January

December 25 - January 1st

Museum Grounds CLOSED!

The grounds will be closed for the holiday week to give our staff a much needed break to recharge for 2020! We will reopen at 10:00 a.m, Thursday, January 2nd. Normal hours will resume at that time.

January 15 through February 29

***Wish You Were Here* Exhibit**

Sheriff's Residence, Free Admission

Wish You Were Here will feature postcards that showcase familiar locations around the county and some will give us a glimpse at the inside thoughts of Berrien's many residents.

January 9

***TNC Talk: The Fur Trade*, 6:30 p.m.**

1839 Courthouse, Free admission

Dr. Brian Carroll, director of the Heritage Museum and Cultural Center in St. Joseph, will explore the world of the early North American fur trade. From the economic to the environmental, the impact the fur trade had on communities throughout Canada and the US are still felt today. Refreshments will be available.

January 26

***Meriendas on the Courthouse: The Music of Mexico*, 2:30 p.m.**

1839 Courthouse, \$5 public, \$2 members

Our new Merienda series explores the heritage of the world through music and this month we visit Mexico. A land with a rich musical landscape, guests will have a chance delve deep into Mexican traditions as told through its songs. This series is in partnership with Andrews University's Department of Music. Refreshments will be available.

An Now a Word from the Director

A journey is like marriage. The certain way to be wrong is to think you control it.

John Steinbeck

My dear friends,

I have an amazing friend named Mandi who has given up on New Year's resolutions as a whole. Instead, she chooses a Word of the Year - something akin to a theme. She told me that what she loved about doing a Word of the Year is how she is challenged to live that word. So I, being a very smart person, followed her footsteps.

While I haven't quite settled on my own 2020 Word of the Year, I've already set in motion one for the BCHA - Journey.

Our logbook is a wall calendar covered in post-it notes. Some of our planned events are old favorites - like coming home to port. Others are brand new and are leading us into uncharted territory. And unlike that paint swatch in the Sheriff's Residence in November, I am thrilled to my toes to take this leap into the unknown.

We were asked by our members, friends, and supporters for something new and engaging. So that's why I don't fear the unknown - my staff and I aren't alone. You're here for the Journey and I can't wait to experience it together!

Whistle for the wind!

Rhannon

A Curated Corner: Of Polar Bears and War



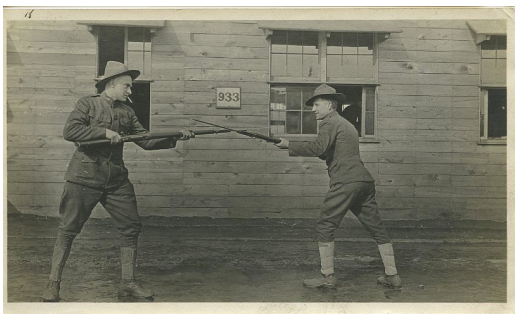
By Sandra Spiering, Curator

As the cold and snow settles upon us for the next few months, the chilly weather brings to my mind a December visit to Bastogne, in Belgium.

In 2013, while there to commemorate the Battle of the Bulge, I took part in a 6 kilometer walk through the Belgian countryside, completed in sub-zero temperatures. Even though I was only outside for a few hours and clothed in heavy winter attire, the walk illustrated the terrible circumstances which the soldiers in 1944 had to endure...all while underdressed and undersupplied. While many people are familiar with the Battle of the Bulge in World War II, there is a lesser-known story of another winter conflict, one that occurred during the Great War.



Soldier in Russia, name unknown



Two members of the 85th Division spare with bayonets during practice while on-site in Russia.

In the summer of 1918, recruits from Michigan and Wisconsin trained at Fort Custer in Battle Creek, soon to be a part of the Army's 85th Division. A few months later, while the rest of the division sailed to France, five thousand men headed to Russia to join operations there. These men were known as the American North Russian Expeditionary Forces. With issued Russian equipment and weapons, their destination was Archangelsk, a port on the White Sea about 600 miles north of Moscow.

Through a bitter cold winter, with nighttime temperatures reaching 50 degrees below zero, the soldiers countered Bolsheviks attacks, protected communication lines, and secured seaports throughout the Arctic Circle. Nicknamed the Polar Bears, the men fought for eight months in Russia, suffering many casualties and hardships during their campaign to protect the Western Front. Even after the armistice was signed on November 11, 1918, the Polar Bears continued to fight.

Finally, after pressure from family members and Washington politicians, the order to withdraw the troops was issued in the spring of 1919 and the soldiers were finally able to return home.

Today there is a monument to the Michigan Polar Bears in a cemetery in Troy. Known as Boris (upper left), this memorial honors the brave men who fought and died in Russia during the cold winter of 1919.



From the back: Mike and Steve in Russia

Into the Collection Vaults: Stevensville

Each month, we dive deep into the vaults to share pictures and stories from our communities and their histories. This month we look northwest of the courthouse to one of our earliest communities. First platted in the 1840s, Stevensville has been a bustling village for nearly 180 years. Named for founder Thomas Stevens, the community officially incorporated in 1893.



While students today join their peers from Baroda in the Lakeshore School District, in days past, school was just down the road for them. This postcard, from c.1905, shows the old Stevensville High School with several students out front.



Dr. John Beers poses with family on his farm, sometime in 1890. Beers had full intention of being a fruit farmer - which is what drew him to Berrien County in the first place. But thanks to a bad crop, Beers changed his history (and ours) by enrolling in Northwestern University's School of Medicine. But he still kept the farm.



This picture shows what the village looked like around 1909. The tall spire on the right is likely the high school.

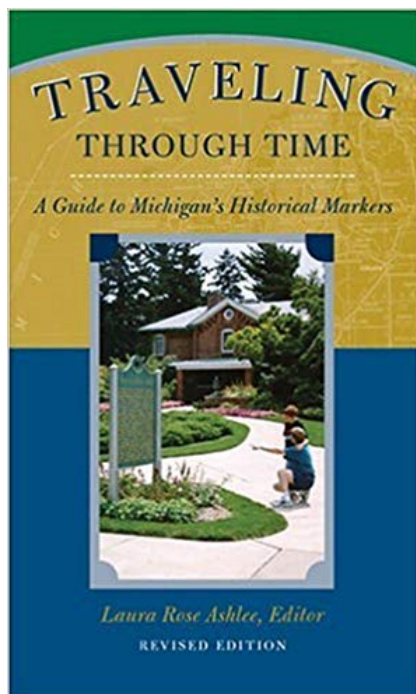


Emilio "Emil" Tosi poses on his birthday in February 1935. Tosi opened the now famous restaurant in 1948 after locals clamored for his mother's Italian cooking.

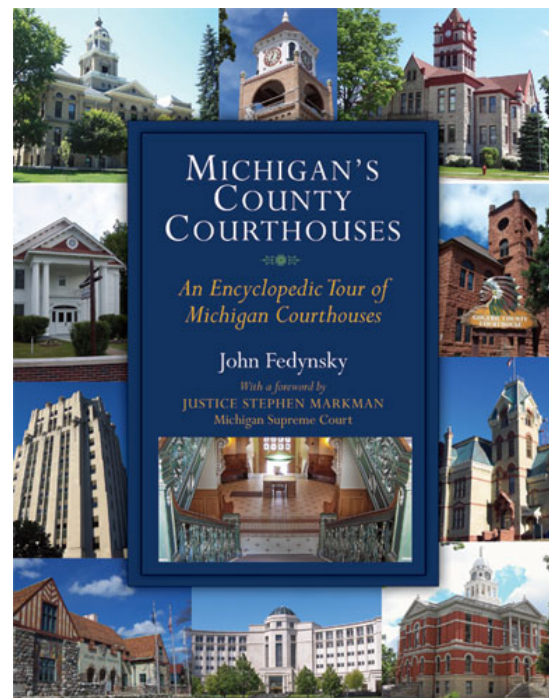
On the Docket Books & Gifts: Happy Birthday, Michigan!

by Tara Velez, Museum Operations Coordinator

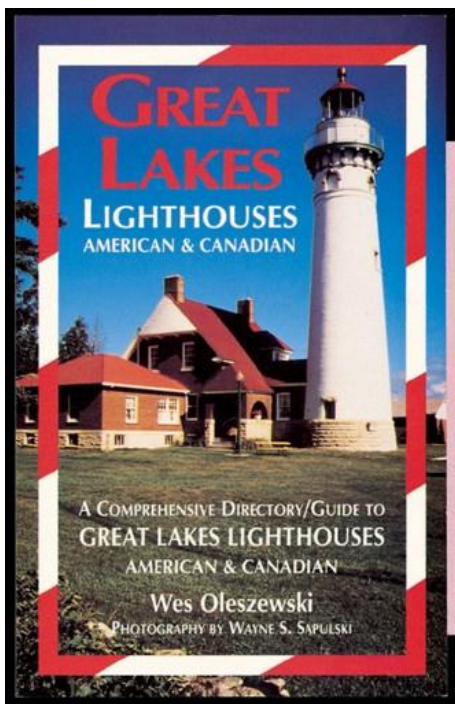
This month, On the Docket Books & Gifts is celebrating 183 years of Michigan state pride! My picks for this month explore all the history that Michigan has to offer here and throughout the state. No matter what interests you, these titles have something for everyone. Like what you see? Pick up your copy from the gift shop!



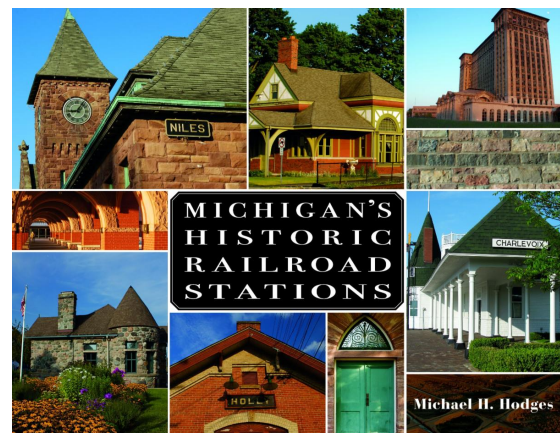
Traveling Through Time: A Guide to Michigan's Historical Markers



Michigan's County Courthouses: An Encyclopedic Tour of Michigan Courthouses



Great Lakes Lighthouses: American & Canadian



Michigan's Historic Railroad Stations

Friends and Partners

Thank you to the follow people and organizations who have made this month's programs a reality!



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Our Mission Statement

The Mission of the BCHA is to collect, preserve and interpret the history of Berrien County through exhibits, tours, publications, and educational and community outreach programs for public benefit.



About the Berrien County Historical Association



The History Center at Courthouse Square is operated by the Berrien County Historical Association and is located in Berrien Springs, MI. Since 1967, the BCHA has operated the five buildings located on Courthouse Square, including the 1839 Courthouse, an 1830s log cabin, a recreated blacksmith forge, an 1870s sheriff's residence, and the 1860s county records building. For more information about our exhibits and programs, contact the BCHA at 269-471-1202. Find us **online**, on **Facebook**, and on **Instagram**.